

**Testimony
Human Services Interim Committee
Representative Damschen, Chairman
July 30, 2013**

Chairman Damschen and members of the Committee: my name is Carlotta McCleary. I am the Executive Director of ND Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (NDFFCMH). NDFFCMH is a parent run advocacy organization that focuses on the needs of children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental disorders and their families, from birth through transition to adulthood.

Mental disorders affect about one in five American children and one in ten experience serious emotional disturbances that severely impair their functioning, according to the Surgeon General's comprehensive report on mental health.

NDFFCMH believes the Partnerships Program is a good system for serving children with Serious Emotional Disorders. Unfortunately, many times there are not enough services in the community to meet the needs of these children and children are ultimately placed in a more costly Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility to have their needs met. NDFFCMH believes services should be enhanced in the community to prevent these placements. Some examples might be an increase in case aide hours may have been what were needed to prevent the child from going into placement.

NDFFCMH would also like to see an increased effort in regards to discharge planning. Families are experiencing a lack of discharge planning both from residential care as well as hospital in patient care. The lack of proper discharge planning often sets the child and their family up for failure due to the lack of needed community supports.

NDFFCMH is also seeing a need for more services in the adult mental health system. We have had several families who have transition age youth in need of enhanced community supports such as supported living environment. The transition plan for some of these young adults is simply not adequate to meet their needs. NDFFCMH would like to see some parity with the DD System where the services weren't tied to a facility and youth could receive ample support to live in their own home. Therefore, we think it would be a good idea to look at increasing the use of case aides.

NDFFCMH would also like to see peer support increased. Peer support includes Parent-to-Parent, Peer-to-Peer, and Youth-to-Youth. NDFFCMH used to be contracted with the DHS to provide Parent-to-Parent services. Currently, the DHS does not have a contract to provide Parent-to-Parent support for families in North Dakota. This is a valuable service to families in North Dakota and we would like to see this program restored.

Thank you for your time,

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